

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

ATTRACTION OF NOCTURNAL MIGRANTS TO CAR HEADLIGHTS
IN THE SUDAN RED SEA HILLS

The appearance of migrant birds at floodlights on moonless misty nights is well known in the Ngulia Hills, Kenya (Pearson & Backhurst 1976). Smaller numbers were also attracted under the same conditions to a single car headlight in the Chyulu Hills in November 1979 (Nikolaus 1980).

Low cloud is usual at night from October onwards on the Sudan Red Sea Hills. Attempts to attract migrants were therefore made using four 45W (12V) vehicle lights on the ENE-facing Erkowit escarpment (1000m above sea level) during early October 1980. These attempts were unsuccessful; three birds were caught in all during periods of experiment late on four consecutive misty moonless nights, a Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, a Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and a Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* (see also Nikolaus 1981).

Observation during the autumns of 1980-82 has since established that the main passerine migration at the Red Sea occurs during late August-September, when the hills are still clear of mist; October movement is on a much reduced scale (Nikolaus & Pearson 1982, Nikolaus 1983 and unpubl. obs.). However, a further experiment with two car headlights plus an additional spotlight was made at Erkowit, in thick mist and with no moon, on the night of 17/18 October 1982, this time with more success.

During the first two hours of full darkness (18:00-20:00 local time) 17 birds were caught in two 12m mist nets placed a few metres in front of the vehicle, and on the edge of the escarpment; over 100 others were seen. These birds appeared from the direction of the Red Sea, and dropped down to the lights from above. Short-toed Larks *Calandrella brachydactyla* and Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* arrived in small groups, and the latter were heard calling before they appeared. Arrivals ceased rather suddenly about 20:00, and no birds were seen during the next half-hour, or during further half-hour periods with the lights on at about midnight and at 04:00. Birds which appeared soon after darkness had perhaps all taken off that evening from the 30 km wide coastal hinterland strip to the northeast of Erkowit. The lack of birds later at night on 17/18 October 1982, and during the 1980 experiments, could imply that migrants on flights originating on the Arabian side of the Red Sea were not attracted down, and perhaps flew at a greater height.

Migrants caught at Erkowit between 18:00 and 20:00 on 17 October 1982 were as follows: 3 Quails *Coturnix coturnix* (7 others seen), 3 Short-toed Larks (many others seen), 2 Black-eared Wheatears *Oenanthe hispanica*, 3 Yellow Wagtails (many others seen), 1 Sprosser *Luscinia luscinia*, 1 Reed Warbler, 1 Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, 1 Garden Warbler *S. borin*, 1 Whitethroat, and 1 Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (2 others seen). A few Ortolan Buntings *Emberiza hortulana* were seen but none was caught, and a few Tree Pipits *Anthus trivialis* were heard.

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G. Nikolaus, 219 Cuxhaven, Feldweg 87, West Germany and D.J. Pearson, Department of Biochemistry, Box 30197, Nairobi

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JACK SNIPE *LYMNOCRYPTES MINIMUS*, COMMON SNIPE *GALLINAGO GALLINAGO* AND BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER *LIMICOLA FALCINELLUS* AT NDOLA, ZAMBIA

The purpose of this note is to document my Ndola records of three waders species which are rarely recorded in Zambia. No details of these records have appeared elsewhere, but mention was made in Taylor (1980) of the occurrence of the two snipe species at Ndola.

Lymnocyptes minimus Jack Snipe

I recorded this species on two occasions at Itawa swamps, Ndola (12.57'S, 28.47'E). One was flushed by my dog from short tussocky grass and mud on 6 March 1979, and one was seen standing on a muddy track in short wet grass on 4 February 1980. Both sightings were in the early morning. The birds were identified by their small size, short bills, bold pale lines on the back, graduated all-brown tails, mottled flanks, short legs, lack of pale central crown streak, and their flight. Great Snipe *Gallinago media* and African Snipe *G. nigripennis* were also present on both occasions, and in 1979 Common Snipe *G. gallinago* was also present for comparison. Full details of both records are on file at the Zoological Museum, Tring, England.

There is only one other record of the Jack Snipe from Zambia, that of one at Mwinilunga (11.44'S, 24.26'E) on 26 October 1946 (Benson *et al.* 1971). However, two were recorded as having been shot at Itawa on 31 December 1973 by the late Dr F.W. Gilbert, a keen wildfowler who had also shot this species in the UK (P. Gilbert *in litt.*). Although no details were preserved, this record would seem to be acceptable on the basis of Dr Gilbert's experience of snipe in Zambia and the UK. The Itawa records are the most southerly for the species in Africa.

Gallinago gallinago Common Snipe

One was present at Itawa on 3 March 1978, and one from 26 February 1979 to at least 9 March 1979, with at least two on 6 March 1979. Great and African Snipe were also present for comparison. The Common Snipe were identified using the criteria given in Taylor (1980); this paper also gives details of the habitat occupied by all three species. Benson *et al.* (1971) did not accept the occurrence of this species in Zambia, but Button (1973) showed that this snipe has reached Zambia in small numbers in several years (the latest year mentioned is 1964) and that in the early 1940s it was not uncommon at Itawa. It may be of regular occurrence in Zambia, and is probably overlooked, but my intensive observations at Itawa from 1975 to 1980 produced only the 1978 and 1979 sightings given above, so the bird's status at Ndola appears to have changed considerably in the last 40 years. The 1979 records were at the time of the greatest abundance of the other *Gallinago* species at Itawa.

Limicola falcinellus Broad-billed Sandpiper

One was at Kanini Sewage Works, Ndola (12.59'S, 28.38'E) on 21 October 1979, at a time of increased wader numbers following heavy storms on the previous day. The bird fed alongside Little Stint *Calidris minuta*, Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea* and other species. It was identified by its size (smaller than